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## ORGANIZING CLASS MEETING FOR PRIMARY STUDENTS IN VIETNAM WITH THE APPROACH OF LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

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### ABSTRACT

In Vietnamese primary schools, class meeting is usually held in the last period of the school week. It is included in the collective activities of students at school. Class meeting plays an important role, both helping students to recognize and evaluate learning and training activities during the week, as well as an opportunity to students continue to participate in practice and educational activities organized in the topic. Class meeting helps to build a positive learning environment, build morals and qualities for students, contribute to building a class collective of solidarity, compassion, care, sharing and helping each other. Learning through play is an educational approach that encourages students to develop creativity, interaction, and autonomy. This helps build important skills such as logical thinking, communication and problem solving. By organizing activities with this approach, students are engaged in an active learning environment. Students can experience a fun and exciting learning process that creates social interaction and connections between students and teachers. Reality shows that primary school teachers in Vietnam have been actively implementing teaching innovation and experiential activities. Many teachers have also included fun activities in their lessons but most of these activities are only shown in game organization activities. Teachers do not have an overview and exploit many benefits from all types of learning through play in teaching hours and experiential activities, especially in class meeting.

**KEYWORDS:** class meeting, primary school students, learning through play, excitement, social interaction, active participation.

### INTRODUCTION

In a 2017 study, researchers found that children participating in a Game-Based Learning Program in preschool often scored higher in classroom management and executive organization compared to children in conventional preschools whose teaching is mainly based on direct instruction [6]; [7]. Human learning is shaped and evolved through playful behavior [9]. There is an alarming increase in mental status in children when play activities are impaired [5]. Some researchers have also suggested that learning through play supports the development of early literacy and numeracy skills

through an integrated approach, while children's social, emotional, physical and creative skills [9];[14].

When children do an activity in the form of play, they have more concentration, higher attention, and more signs of happiness. In general, seeing every activity as a game has significant benefits, that is, creating positive participation and joy for children [9]; [10]; [11]. When engaged in a fun and stimulating environment, children become in a positive emotional and cognitive state, helping them to continue to perform the task enthusiastically. The use of games and fun experiences also reinforces the effectiveness of learning tasks in all situations and types of play [14]; [15].

In 2019, The LEGO Foundation published "Learning through play". Many authors highlight that today's world and the future are increasingly interconnected and dynamic, requiring children to possess new skill sets in the process of growing and facing the need for continuous lifelong learning. Learning through play has been shown to contribute positively to holistic development. It helps children acquire the knowledge, mindset and skills they need to successfully navigate this diverse future. The author's goal is to encourage creative and continuous growth throughout the lives of young people, in order to create strong individuals in the modern world. This document greatly appreciates the important role that learning through play plays in the all-round development of children. [19]

Play is considered an important source of support for children to cope with stress. Children are able to understand and adapt to challenges through creative problem solving and emotional management in stressful situations [13]; [14]. Play provides space and opportunity for children to engage in polite play, which in turn increases their self-regulation and exposes them to serious and prolonged situations. Play can also be used to support families experiencing stress and crisis, helping children overcome stress and trauma through play [5]; [6].

In Vietnam, the General Education Program 2018 has set an important goal of renovating education at the primary level to develop all-round students in terms of qualities and abilities, preparing to meet the requirements of the 4.0 context. [1]. One of the key points of educational innovation is the shift from a focus on memorizing academic knowledge to developing learners' competencies through solving real-world problems [1]; [2]. In this field, the application of the approach of learning through play in classroom activities is attracting much attention from teachers and schools.

However, although learning through play has been widely studied and applied for a long time, only one project has officially been implemented and replicated in primary schools in the direction of a systematic and scientific research approach. [4]. Although the research work on learning through play is still limited, focusing mainly on a number of specific aspects, especially only in terms of learning methods associated with games, there have not been many studies applied to each subject in primary school in general and especially in experiential activities and types of class meeting in

primary schools. Therefore, the study of the process of organizing class meeting in primary school and the type and characteristics of learning through play to build an effective process of designing and organizing class meeting is a gap and needs to be researched to be able to come up with effective practical measures [12].

### **Research Questions:**

The purposes of the article are to analyze class meeting in primary school and the organization according to the approach to learning through play to answer the question: What are the objectives and characteristics of class meeting in primary schools? What is learning through play? What features does it have? How is the process of designing and organizing class meeting in primary schools with the approach of learning through play? After that, a plan to organize a class meeting for primary students in the direction of learning through play is illustrated.

## **2. RESEARCH CONTENT**

### **2.1. Objectives and characteristics of class meeting in primary schools in Vietnam**

Class meeting includes the daily activities of students in a class collective, usually held on the last lesson of the school week. Class meeting is organized in the form of self-management, in order to build a united and friendly student body towards comprehensive development for students [3]; [2].

Class meeting takes place regularly and continuously, including group activities in the classroom. This is where students experience and develop important skills such as active and confident listening, which help them get used to working and living in a group [2]; [12]. Dakar Action Program has stated that everyone has the right to a secure education system in which learning to know, learning to do, learning to live with others and learning to assert oneself. These four pillars represent an educational approach based on a combination of psychosocial competence and psychomotor and practical skills. Therefore, it is necessary to clearly define educational content according to the four-pillar approach in education in the 21st century, including class meeting in primary schools.

As one of the three compulsory types of Vietnam's Primary School Experience Program, class meeting is aimed at building student solidarity, developing social skills, and building awareness of value, individual responsibility and accountability in a group, towards meeting educational goals [2]. Detail:

- Building student solidarity: Class meeting aims to create conditions for students to connect with each other, develop a spirit of solidarity, mutual understanding and respect. It helps to create a united, strong and supportive student body in the learning and development process.

- Developing social skills: Class meeting provides opportunities for students to practice and develop important social skills such as communication, cooperation, listening, and conflict resolution. It helps students practice social interaction skills, form the right attitude and develop the ability to work in groups.

- Improving self-control and self-study ability, developing self-control ability for students, practicing self-assessment and assessment skills to build a sense of personal worth and responsibility. Class meeting aims at helping students realize their own values and individual responsibilities in the group. It encourages students to be confident, caring and sharing with each other, while ensuring compliance with the rules and responsibility for the class as a whole.

In primary schools, class meeting is held on the last period of the school week. It is organized with the following basic characteristics:

**Proactivity and self-management:** Class meeting are usually organized and run by the students themselves and the class members. Students are given responsibility and autonomy in the planning and implementation of Classroom activities. This helps develop leadership, organization and personal responsibility skills for students.

**Inclusiveness and multi-purpose:** Class meeting not only focus on academic activities but also includes cultural, artistic, physical education, social and volunteer activities. The goal of this period is to develop diverse aspects of students, from academic skills to mental, physical, and social development.

**Creativity and flexibility:** Class meeting often have flexibility and variety in the way students organize and choose activities. Students are encouraged to contribute ideas and suggest activities according to the interests and needs of the class. This facilitates students' creativity and discovery in the process of organizing and participating in class meeting activities.

**Interactivity and cohesion:** Class meeting provide opportunities for students to meet, exchange and interact with each other outside of the formal learning space. Students can share, learn and build good relationships with their classmates. This contributes to the creation of a united and cohesive class collective.

## **2.2. Learning through play**

As explained by VVOB, "Learning through play is understood as an educational approach in which students interact, experience, discover knowledge and solve learning tasks in a fun environment. Teachers have the task of connecting learning goals with play activities to encourage students to participate autonomously, thereby contributing to the development of necessary qualities and competencies of learners".[4] "Play is educational when it is fun, meaningful, participatory, has plenty of opportunities for experimentation, and has social interaction" (Zosh, 2018). According to VVOB's concept, "play" is understood in a broad sense. "It is the process in which learners participate in advocacy activities, perform discovery activities, and solve problems. That process of "play" is done in a fun and meaningful learning environment, helping learners to form and build new knowledge and skills"[4].

According to VVOB, "Learning through play is understood as not merely games, but educational "play" is understood as when learning activities help students feel happy, meaningful, and motivate

them to be active to participate and have lots of opportunities for experimentation and social interaction” [4]. These are also the 5 characteristics of learning through play.

**Fun and excitement:** Learners have a positive and happy attitude in the learning process. They have joy and satisfaction in achieving and progressing in acquiring new knowledge and skills. Children often show joy and interest by smiling. They may let out a loud, full laugh or smile softly, appearing happy and relaxed. Children may encounter challenges at times when participating in play activities, but when they do, they will experience feelings of suspense, anxiety and finally and burst of joy when the task is completed, playing activities bring certain results. Students are happy and excited so they often have eagerness and excitement in the face of new experiences. They can explode with joy when they are engaged in a favorite activity or when given the opportunity to discover something new. From there, they will be satisfied and confident with themselves. They feel confident in their abilities.

**Active participation:** When learning through play is organized, students must have the opportunity to participate actively in learning activities. Students actively participating in learning activities often have basic manifestations, such as voluntary and willingness to participate. They voluntarily participate in activities without being forced to participate or feeling pressured. They show willingness and interest to participate in the activity without prompting from others. They often have energy and passion in the activities of their choice, putting all their focus and efforts into performing and completing tasks with enthusiasm. They are proactive and confident in giving ideas and being creative in activities. They are not afraid to experiment, are willing to learn and explore new approaches, and persevere in the process of participating in activities. Students are not discouraged by challenges and difficulties, but strive to overcome them and do not give up easily.

**Meaningfulness:** Activities that are meaningful to students are activities that students find valuable and meaningful in their learning and personal development. These are activities where students can put their acquired knowledge and skills into practice, creating experiences that are useful and beneficial to their development. Activities that are meaningful to students are also reflected in their direct relevance to reality in their daily lives. It helps students apply knowledge to real-life situations and thereby gain a better understanding of the relationship between theory and practice.

**Plenty of opportunities for experimentation (repetition):** An activity that is meaningful to students provides many opportunities for experimentation and repetition. In the process of playing and learning, children do not simply participate in an activity once, but they are encouraged to practice and change possible possibilities. This helps children discover new challenges and acquire knowledge on a deeper level. This approach gives children the opportunity to find multiple solutions to a problem, thereby developing multi-dimensional thinking. Teachers play an important role in encouraging repetition by using targeted questions, cues, and models to guide students. As a result, students are encouraged to participate actively and build confidence in the learning process.

Social interaction: Social interaction in the learning process brings many important benefits. First, social interaction allows children to communicate their ideas, opinions, and thoughts to others. By interacting with each other, children can better understand the opinions and perspectives of others, thereby building a deeper understanding of the world around them and developing lasting social relationships. In addition, when learning takes place in new and different environments, such as outdoors, on field trips or in a group, social interaction plays an important role in developing communication skills and social skills. In this process, students practice communicating, cooperating and interacting with other individuals, learning how to work in groups and resolve conflicts. This helps them develop social skills that are important in everyday life and form good relationships with those around them.

Based on the above ways of organizing learning activities and considering the 5 characteristics of learning through play, VVOB has generalized learning through play with the following 3 basic types: Firstly, learning through free play is the type where play is clearly expressed. It allows students to freely explore and learn through play activities.

Secondly, learning through oriented play is the play-based learning that combines play activities and specific learning goals. In this form, play activities are designed and organized in a structured and guided manner in order to achieve certain learning goals. When learning through oriented play, the teacher or instructor has an important role in determining learning goals and shaping appropriate play activities.

Thirdly, learning through games is an educational method that uses play activities and games to create an interesting and engaging learning environment for students. In this form, the games are designed in a way that is targeted and relevant to the learning content.

### **2.3. The process of designing and organizing class meeting in primary schools according to the approach of learning through play**

When designing class meeting for 3rd graders in the direction of learning through play, teachers can follow the following process:

Determining the goals of class meeting for students: Determine the needs and goals of class meeting based on the Experiential Activities program and the overall general education program. This helps ensure that class meeting is designed to meet the learning goals and program requirements.

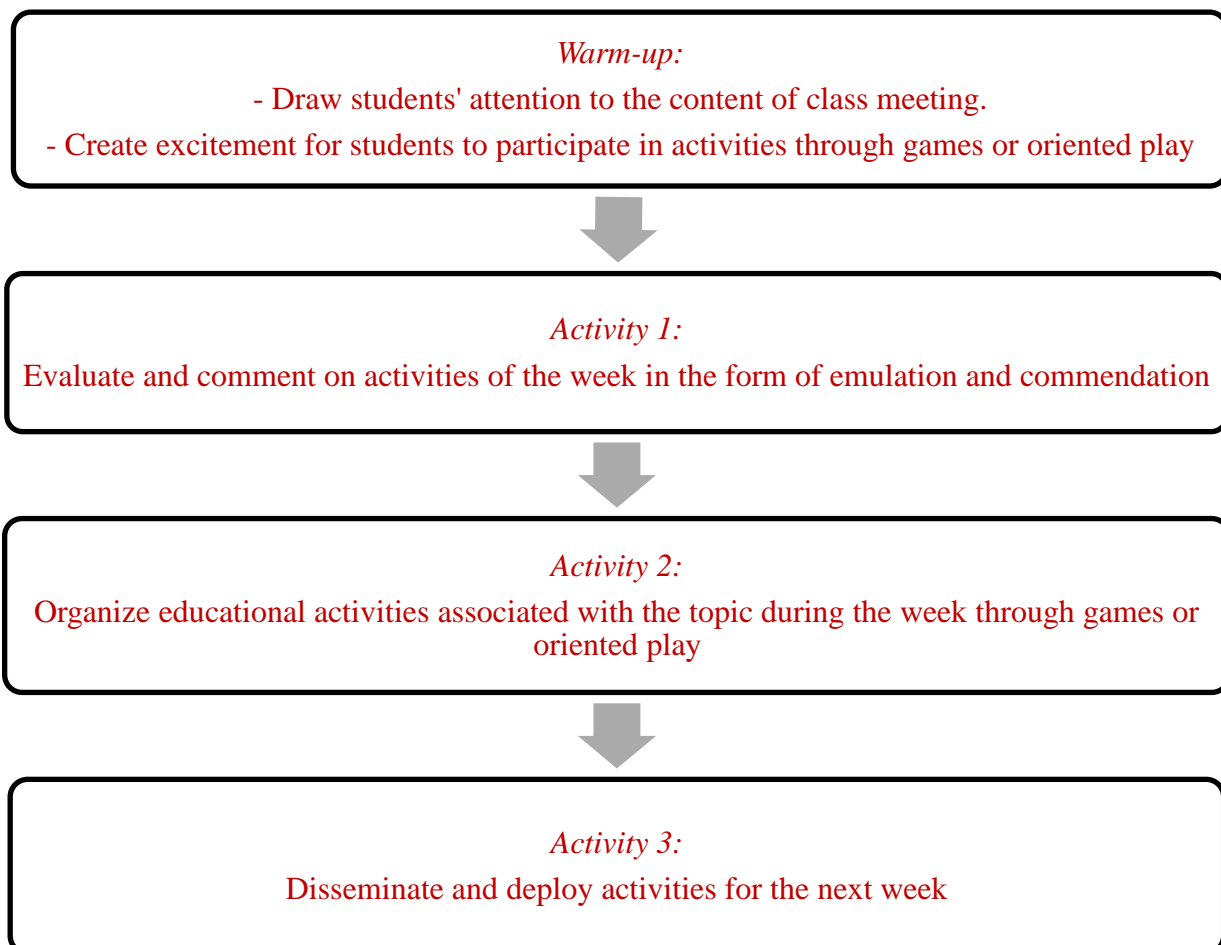
Choosing the appropriate type of play and organization method: Choose the type of play suitable to the content of the class meeting. There are 3 types of learning through play: learning through free play, learning through oriented play and learning through games. However, learning through oriented play and learning through games are often more appropriate when organized in class meeting associated with specific learning program goals. After determining the type of play, teachers choose methods,

techniques and organizational forms suitable for students. They can flexibly combine many methods and techniques; regularly change the space and organization of the classroom for students to perform and use the form of groups, individuals, outdoor activities, online participation...

Designing appropriate activity content: Determine the content of learning through play that students will participate in in association with the goals and requirements of the subject of the experiential activity. This content should be closely related to the concepts and knowledge that students need to master. At the same time, the content should be designed so that it is interesting and engages students in the learning process and themed educational activities.

Evaluating the plan to organize class meeting according to the approach of learning through play: After designing a class activity plan, teachers can share ideas with other teachers and subject groups to collect initial ideas to improve the quality of class meeting.

On the basis of studying the objectives, characteristics and content of the class activity period, it is possible to propose the process of organizing a class activity period in primary school according to the



**Diagram 1. The process of organizing class meeting for primary students with the approach of learning through play**

**2.4. Plan to organize a class meeting for primary students with the approach of learning through play**

On the basis of studying the content of class meeting and the process of organizing class meeting with the approach of learning through play, we design a sample of class meeting for primary students with the approach of learning through play as follows:

**Theme of class meeting: Skilful hands**

**1. Warm-up**

- Teacher plays music and organizes the game "Our neat room"

The rules of the game: When the music starts, students in groups will compete to arrange some items in the right place. When the music ends, the teams will observe and comment on their team's tidying process and that of their friends.

- The teacher asks the question:

+ Are the items in the right place?

+ What are the benefits of arranging items neatly?

- Invite students to present.

- Teacher summarizes the game, praises and leads into the topic content.

**2. Evaluate and comment on activities of the week**

- The teacher asks the class monitor (or vice-monitor) to evaluate the results of the weekend activities. The teacher asks the groups to discuss, comment, and supplement the week's contents.

+ The results of routine activities.

+ Learning outcomes.

+ Results of movement activities.

- The teacher invites the groups to comment and supplement; Vote by giving colored paper stars to groups and individuals who perform well in learning and training activities during the week.

- The teacher gives general comments and praises.

**3. Class meeting by topic of the week**

Activity 1: Share about the things you have done at home to arrange things neatly and tidily.

- The teacher uses ball bearing technique: ask students to stand in two concentric circles, facing each other and discuss in pairs to share what they have done to arrange things neatly at home. Suggested questions:

+ Which corner of the family have you arranged? Which job are you most proud of?

- The teacher let students self-assess whether they have good hands when arranging furniture.

- The teacher invites other groups to comment.

Activity 2: Label to locate your group's belongings



- The teacher divides the class into 4 groups, gives each group names or pictures of their classmates to do the following tasks:
  - Group 1: Label the place for the shoes of the groups.
  - Group 2: Mark the position of hanging umbrellas, hats and raincoats of the groups.
  - Group 3: Paste your photos into the class locker.
  - Group 4: Label the name of the cup holder of the groups.
- The teacher and the whole class express their determination to put it in the right place after using it: "After using it, put it in the right place - Always be neat and tidy!".
- The teacher makes general comments, praises the subtle observation ability of the groups.
- 4. *Disseminate and deploy activities for the next week*
  - The teacher asks the class monitor (or vice-monitor) to deploy the next week's activity plan. The teacher asks groups to discuss, comment, and supplement the contents of the plan: Learn about how to arrange books and notebooks and how to make some products to decorate the study corner.
  - The teacher gives general comments, agreements, and votes for action.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Classroom activities in Vietnamese primary schools play an extremely important role in creating a positive learning environment and building social skills for students. During this process, students have the opportunity to interact and bond with each other, building a sense of unity in the class. Class meeting is part of experiential activities in primary schools, it makes a significant contribution to the realization of the common goal of developing students' qualities and abilities. Through the approach of learning through play, teachers can organize students to participate in interesting learning activities such as games, discussions, problem solving, group work, etc. From there, students can learn how to listen and share ideas, creating a safe space to express their thoughts and feelings. This encourages confidence and develops students' social skills. In fact, research in some primary schools in Vietnam shows that the content of class meeting is still heavy on assessment and summarization of students' learning and training activities during the week. Teachers mainly use the presentation method; students listen and remember the results achieved during the week; class staff comment on the advantages and disadvantages of individuals and groups during the week. When correctly identifying the objectives, characteristics, content and process of organizing class meeting with the approach of learning through play, a fun and inspiring learning environment will be created. Students are encouraged and praised for individual and group achievements, which foster dedication and personal growth. The excitement and joy in class meeting inspire students to love learning and put more effort into the learning process.

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